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BRUSSELS LESSON

Experience gained at the Brussels World's Fair teaches us a lesson about the usefulness of our participation and special activities during the international gatherings where the Soviets were present. Of course, we should not expect any miracles as a result of this participation and contacts with the Soviet visitors. In view of the present situation, defections are rather problematic. By the way, defection of Soviets should not be considered as the only proof of successful activities and the only desirable goal. Having in mind the present political situation and East-West relations, it seems of no less importance to our cause to use all the possibilities to influence Soviet visitors with our political and social programs and to acquaint them with the conditions in the West.

Since my stay in Brussels was almost exclusively concentrated on the Ukrainians from the USSR, my further conclusions and opinions on the topic are based on the experiences with this particular segment of the Soviet population and therefore apply to this national group with its specific political background. Nevertheless, one conclusion from this experience seems to have a general meaning. It is that, in spite of the fact that all Soviet citizens going abroad are specially chosen and politically checked, and the majority are Communist Party members or activists able to make a foreign trip for their achievements in various fields of Soviet life, for the most part these visitors are eager to learn as much as possible about the West, about life in the West, and they compare what they see and learn abroad with what they were told by Soviet propaganda. They also have a good opportunity to compare their living conditions at home with those abroad. By helping them to see this, our world, and its ideas in the proper light, we are already fulfilling a very important mission of weakening their belief in the Soviet regime; we force them to think; and last but not least, we help them to make up their own mind on many important political, social and economic issues and to revise their present views. In other words, we are filling their minds with dynasite of ideas, comparisons and conclusions which could be for the Soviet regime more dangerous than hundreds of defectors, because while the latter will remain in the West, the visitors carry their doubts to the USSR. Without a doubt they will talk about their impressions abroad with their friends and intimates at home and in this way will spread their first-hand impressions and observations.

As mentioned above, we gained our experience in this field dealing with Ukrainians from the USSR and what we are going to summarize below applies primarily to that particular national group of Soviet visitors.

Trained Personnel for Operations

In spite of 40 years of Soviet rule and Russification, the young generation of Ukrainians from the USSR is interested in the Ukrainian national cause.

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To respond to this interest requires on our part a thorough and up-to-date knowledge of the political situation, especially an orientation of the developments in recent years in the Ukraine and abroad. Therefore, only politically trained persons are in a position to carry on a discussion with the Ukrainians from the USSR, to argue with them, and to influence them. Besides, they must have the basic knowledge of the mentality of Ukrainians from the USSR whom they encounter and to realize that they are proud of the achievements in the Ukraine. They also should know that the visitors are eager to save their political face in the presence of an outsider and to show themselves as loyal adherents to the Soviet regime, at least during the initial stages of the discussion. Persons used for contacting Soviet Ukrainians should have a natural, human warmth and elasticity. They must know how to start a discussion and when to end it, when to pursue a given topic or whether to change the subject. To have this team of trained and experienced persons for contacts with the Ukrainians from the USSR is the most important condition for successful action in this field.

Identification

The first identification of a person who is going to approach a Ukrainian from the Soviet Union is without a doubt the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian newspapers and Ukrainian books printed abroad. Use of the Ukrainian language is of greatest importance in contacts with Ukrainians from the USSR. Experience proved that while the same Ukrainian from the USSR was willing and even eager to be involved in a discussion with a person speaking to him in the Ukrainian language, at the same time was afraid when approached by other persons who spoke to him in Russian. That is because the use of the Russian language creates irrationally, in his sub-conscious, an association of the person speaking this language with the Soviet regime and makes him alert to possible danger. The identification of the Ukrainian newspaper printed abroad is also a very good key for approach to a Ukrainian from the USSR, provided that it is used at the proper time; i.e., not at the initial stage of the contact.

Technique of Approach

As a rule, the conversation with Ukrainians from the USSR should never be started with political issues or with criticisms of the Soviet regime. In order to secure an interesting development of conversation and eventually a more intimate exchange of views, it is necessary to start with general human interest problems. Also, arguments should be avoided in this first stage of an approach and we should allow our partner to "free himself" of Soviet propaganda slogans. As a matter of fact, the Soviet being approached considers these slogans a protection against any ulterior motives the stranger making the approach may have. Having satisfactorily passed this first stage of conversation, we can proceed to the second stage, to our information about the Ukrainian national cause in general and the activities of Ukrainian emigration in particular and to ask him about conditions at home. Having passed on to

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our interlocutor some positive facts about the activities of the Ukrainian emigration and the Ukrainian national cause at large, we shall leave the final conclusions to him, and not create the impression that we are agitating him. We should give him enough facts to think about later and to make up his own mind about the problem. Usually our partner will be interested in the international situation and as a rule he will start this topic with an attack on so-called American "Imperialism" and repeat some slogans from Soviet propaganda. The presentation of facts and explanation about the real political situation should be our answer. If involved in a discussion and we feel that our interlocutor is losing ground, we should not let him feel that now he has lost, also we should not give him an added kick, but permit him to save face. We should not look for self-satisfaction at this point by putting him on the spot, but let him, even help him, to change his theme. The Soviet is already conscious of his weakness and will later, by himself, recall this problem, maybe even become critical of his indoctrination by Soviet propaganda.

Presenting Our Case

We must not leave our interlocutor in doubt about what we believe and are fighting for. We must let him go back home with a clear idea of the general framework of our political views. For that purpose we must change our attitude from that of a more or less passive listener and switch to a strong but not insulting attack on the Soviet regime, we should present facts, and with the full power of our convictions, present our political aims. From our former discussion with our interlocutor we should have gained some idea of his character and know what sort of arguments might make the biggest impression on him. By presenting our case to our interlocutor we should try to stimulate him and through him his colleagues in the Ukraine to fight for his rights as a human being and as a member of the Ukrainian nation. Carefully avoiding to create the impression that we are going to suggest some action which under present Soviet conditions are impossible to be realized, we should draw his attention to discrepancies of Soviet theory and practice. For instance, we should emphasize that the Soviet constitution is only a piece of paper not materialized in fact. Especially we should emphasize the lack of equality between the nations, insofar as their political independence is concerned. As we know from experience, our interlocutor will defend the present status of the Ukraine and mention such facts as the sovereignty of the Ukraine, her membership in the United Nations, the Ukrainization of schools, etc. Giving him and his Ukrainian compatriots in the Ukraine credit for certain recent achievements in the field of Ukrainization, we at the same time should stress the abnormality of a situation that the Ukraine needs to be Ukrainized. By doing so, we reach the point where he openly, or silently, admits the fact of Soviet Russian rule in the Ukraine. Not omitting from him open admission of this situation (as a matter of fact, the acquisition of the Ukraine bourgeois nationalism is still the greatest crime and treason in the Ukraine), we should explain to him that just as recent achievements in the Ukraine are the results of the Ukrainian struggle for freedom, so further

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achievements depend upon the attitude of the Ukrainian population inside the Ukraine. This means that primarily they must help themselves. Being careful not to create unrealistic hopes as to the capabilities of the Ukrainian emigration and intentions of active aid to the Ukrainian national cause by the West, we nevertheless should give him reasonable hope that: (a) the Ukrainian emigration abroad is politically active and is trying to help its fatherland by informing the Western world about the aspirations and struggles of the Ukrainian nation; (b) that these efforts are successful and that the Ukrainian cause gains moral and political support in some Western countries.

In addition to this topic on the Ukrainian national problem, which proves to be one of most interest to the Ukrainians from the USSR, the economic and social problems belong to the standard issues of the conversation. Only a short visit in Belgium revealed to Soviet visitors the differences between their standard of living and those in the Western country. As a rule, the Soviet doesn't like to admit it and we should not ask him to admit it, bearing in mind that he likes to save face and is not prepared to admit the weaknesses of his regime. Admitting some achievements in the USSR, we should draw his attention to the fact that all this and much greater achievements could be made in another way without immense suffering of the Soviet population. At this particular time of the discussion it might be advisable to go deeper into a theoretical discussion about Marxist theory and Soviet practices, provided that the operator is sufficiently prepared to carry on such a discussion. Shortly before parting, we can try to pass to the Soviet our literature. In the event that during the discussion we achieved closer rapport, our farewell should be warm and we should let him depart with a knowledge that we understand his position, that we had and have no intention of harming him in any way, but to help him in any way we can. In case our partner remained stiff during the discussion and showed himself as a stubborn believer in the Soviet propaganda, we should try to pass on our literature anyway, with the comment that even a Party member should not be afraid to read the opinion of the other side.

Literature

The Ukrainians from the USSR, as well as other Soviet citizens, are in general assiduous readers. For them the printed word has greater meaning than to a Westerner. The majority of Ukrainians from the USSR are already informed by the Soviet Ukrainian press about the existence of the Ukrainian emigration, their activities, their press and their books. The picture they receive from Soviet propaganda about the Ukrainian emigration is to such a degree tendentious that they themselves do not believe what they are told. Therefore, their eagerness to get such an emigre newspaper or book is great and genuine. It depends on circumstances whether they agree to take the proposed literature immediately or wait, as it was in many cases in Brussels, until a better opportunity arises. The proper approach of a Soviet is of great importance. It is of similar importance not only to supply the Soviet tourist with books or newspapers, but to supply him with literature most

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suitable to him in particular. This fact creates the necessity of preparing special booklets for distribution among Soviet visitors. Special in this, in order that they can easily be hidden in their clothes, and in content, so as to be understood by the reader. It would be too involved to try to explain here the very complex problem of how and what to write in these booklets. We should only like to emphasize the necessity of issuing special pamphlets prepared on the basis of gained experiences and for distribution among Soviet readers only. Also recommended are the use of humorous cartoons with political satire.

Some Specific Observations Made during the
Brussels World's Fair

1. In regard to the possibilities of approaching Soviet visitors, there was a marked difference between the older and the younger generations. While the older generation--50's and up--are obviously afraid of any contacts with foreigners, having still in their bones a fear of persecutions of the Stalin era; the younger generation--25 to 35--is more free in its behavior towards foreigners. They have not experienced the purges and other atrocities of the 1930's and 40's and, being more or less a product of the Soviet regime, too young for any deviations from the Party line, they are more daring. Their education and present social position makes them more receptive to approach.

2. After the first identification by their mother tongue, the Ukrainian from the USSR tries to determine just whom the person is who approached him. In some cases, where the operator could identify himself as a citizen of a foreign country (especially North America), this was accepted as sufficient proof that the person concerned was not a Soviet agent, thus enabling further discussion. Sometimes it was possible to establish closer rapport by identifying oneself as a simple worker on leave and with some nostalgia for the home country. Still, in other cases, identifying oneself as a Ukrainian journalist abroad opened the door to a long and interesting conversation. It is impossible to single out any one of these methods as the best. All of them are good if applied to the proper individual.

3. In regard to gifts, meals, and drinks, the visitors were as a rule rather afraid to take them, fearing that the acceptance of them, if known to the Soviet authorities, could bring to them trouble. Gifts, meals, and drinks are advisable only after the operator gets a little closer to the Soviet, and only on a modest scale. In general, the Soviet visitors have their own pride and are not willing to show that they are expecting favors from good persons.

4. The average time for any one operator during the Brussels World's Fair was limited to about one week. After this, the operator became more or less known to the Soviet security people and could not work freely. Consequently, there should be more operators on hand to allow for changes.

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5. In addition to our operators, we had a number of informants in Brussels supplying us with current information regarding Soviet visitors, where they were being quartered, the expected time of arrival of new troops, etc. Hints received from these informants were of great importance. They enabled us to give the necessary orientation to our operators and to prepare tasks for them. Any future similar activities should be based on such a net of informants recruited primarily from among permanent residents in the area concerned.

6. In conclusion, I should like to emphasize the importance of careful advanced planning and preparations for these kinds of activities. Our preparations for the Brussels World's Fair were not quite adequate in time and facilities. Therefore, I strongly recommend thorough and advanced planning and preparation for similar future activities. This would include an advance visit to the area concerned, in order to study the area to determine the fullest utilization of existent opportunities.

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